



Potomac Valley Chapter

American Rhododendron Society

www.arspvc.org

Winter Newsletter: January 2016

Calendar

- * **January 24, 2016** – PVC Regular Meeting, Potomac Community Center
- * **March 4 – March 6, 2016** – North Carolina Plant Trip
- * **March 20, 2016** – Joint Meeting w/ NV-ASA, Kirkwood Presb. Church
- * **April 20-24, 2016** – Joint ARS/ASA Convention, Williamsburg, VA
- * **April 28, 2016** – PVC Field trip to Pennsylvania Nurseries.
- * **May 7, 2016** – Member Garden Tours
- * **May 23 to May 26, 2016** – Cape Cod Field Trip, Sandwich, MA
- * **June 12 to 20, 2016** – Native Azalea Field Trip, North Carolina/Tennessee
- * **July 16, 2016** – Saturday Propagation Workshop, Potomac Comm. Cntr.

Chapter Officers

President: Dan Neckel

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Vice President: Ginny Mohr

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Treasurer: Phyllis Rittman

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Our Next Meeting:

Share Session, Photography Contest, and Seed Planting Activity

Date: January 24, 2016

Time: 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Where: Potomac Community Center

We will have a variety of activities at our January meeting. As in the past, we will include our annual share session where we ask people to bring in digital images to share with our members. They can be from some place you visited this year, plants that bloomed in your garden, or something of interest related to rhododendrons. We ask you to limit your presentation to more than 10 minutes.

This is the meeting for our annual Photography Contest. You can find the rules on the next page, but we did modify them slightly this year. People may enter images taken in 2014 or 2015, as long as the photos were not entered in last year's contest. We will ask our members to vote on their favorites, and the top winners will receive a prize. We do have a limit of one prize per member, so we usually end up giving prizes to everyone who entered.

After we gather up photos from the contest, people can try a third activity, planting rhododendron seeds. We will provide pots, planting medium, and seeds. Our seed listing was very short this year since your editor was traveling and didn't get many donations. We do have some good varieties some that were so scant they could not be listed.

We can all plant some seed and take home a "mini-greenhouse" to watch over. They really should not require any care for as they germinate and grow over the winter. When the weather warms and they gain some size, bring in your excess plants to share.



R. keiskei with insert showing seedpod and tiny seeds

Refreshment Duty: Persons whose last names begin with **A** through **H** are asked to bring something for the refreshment table.

Directions: Potomac Community Center

11315 Falls Rd, Potomac, MD

From **I-270 North**, stay in the **Local lanes**

Take exit **#4B/ MONTROSE RD WEST**

Continue west on Montrose Rd. for **1.7 miles**

Turn **LEFT** on **FALLS RD (MD-189)**

Continue **1.4 miles** to the Center (on the left)

11315 Falls Rd, Potomac, MD

Joint Meeting with NV-ASA on March 20

We will be having a joint meeting with the Northern Virginia Chapter of the Azalea Society of America on March 20. The meeting location will be the Kirkwood Presbyterian Church in Springfield, VA. Naturally, we will discuss the upcoming convention but expect other activities, too. Details will be in the next newsletter.



'Smoky Mountain' - 2015 Best Photo by Carolyn Beck

2016 PVC Photography Contest Rules

We have established the following rules for our local chapter photography contest. We have made a slight change in images that we can accept. Pictures can be taken in 2014 or 2015 as long as you have not entered them in a prior PVC contest.

Category I: Flowers – Close-up of flowers, such as a rhododendron truss or an azalea spray.

Category II: Scenery - Rhododendron or azalea plants in the landscape or in the wild.

Category III: Other – Photographs of rhododendrons or azaleas with emphasis on something else like foliage, people, animals, creative effects, or whatever.

Photography Contest Rules

1. Open to chapter members and associates only.
2. No more than two entries in any category.
3. Photos may be taken in 2014 or 2015.
4. Photos must occur naturally, no composites.
5. Photos may be matted, but no frames or glass.
6. Maximum dimensions: 8" x 10", even if matted.
7. Put your name, the title and category on the back.
8. Photos are the property of the exhibitor but we ask permission to reproduce winners in our newsletter.

Attendees will vote for their favorites, and entries with the highest popularity vote will receive prizes. A single individual can only win one of the prizes so all who enter usually get something. Please enter!

Sad News: Bruno Kaelin

Long-time chapter member Bruno Kaelin passed away on October 16, 2015. He was 88. Bruno was our Potomac Valley Chapter President when we hosted our first ARS Convention in 1982. He was a superb flower show judge and the consummate horticulturist.

When he and his first wife, Evelyn, moved to the area in 1975, they brought many rhododendrons and azaleas with them, as well as hollies and lilies, too. After Evelyn passed away, Bruno married Veronica "Ronnie" Gallagher, his beloved wife and traveling companion for 11 years. He is also survived by 3 children, 4 stepchildren, 14 grandchildren, and 6 great-grandchildren. He will be missed.

Upcoming Events in 2016

Your chapter officers have tried to put together a year of exciting activities for you. Details of our January meeting are in this issue, as well as plans for our annual March fieldtrip to several North Carolina nurseries. We will have another trip to nurseries in Pennsylvania in late April and garden tours in May.

The next newsletter will have more about that and our joint meeting with NV-ASA, but keep your calendars clear for other major activities this year.

Williamsburg Convention: April 20-24

Of course, the big event will be the joint ARS/ASA Convention we are hosting in Williamsburg from April 20 -24. The ARS Journal will be mailed soon, and it has registration forms and convention details. However, our website has even more information to help you plan your trip. You can register online:

www.arsasaconvention2016.org

Expect a phenomenal plant sale including native and evergreen azaleas, rhododendrons, and tree peonies!

Our hotel, the Fort Magruder Inn, is located very close to the Historic District. They have given us the very favorable convention rate of \$119.00 which includes breakfast, and it is valid two days on either side. Make room reservations directly with the hotel:

www.fortmagruderhotel.com

757-220-2250

Even though we do have tours to historical sites before and after the main convention, consider visiting Williamsburg on your own in small groups. That will allow time to visit shops, linger in the gardens, or have a meal in one of the taverns.

Cape Cod Field Trip: May 23-26

Norm Beaudry will once again be coordinating our annual trip to Sandwich, MA (Cape Cod). The expected date will be at the end of May. The trip usually lasts 4 or 5 days including transit time. We will visit private gardens up there but there are often excellent things to see along the way. I enjoy the New England Wildflower Society's Garden in the Woods outside of Framingham, MA. Lovely!

Native Azalea Field Trip: June 12-20

For the native azalea enthusiasts, Don Hyatt and George McLellan will lead the annual June trip to the mountains of North Carolina and Tennessee to see the native azaleas and rhododendrons in bloom. While we were collecting seed in October, the plants in the wild had a very heavy bud set so next season should be awesome, weather permitting. Join us!

Propagation Workshop: July 16

We have reserved the Potomac Community Center on a Saturday in July for a workshop on how to root cuttings and make grafts. We will try to include a demo on how to make leaf castings, too.

Double Honors at the Fall Banquet

Richard and Ginny Mohr Receive the ARS Bronze Medal

At our PVC Fall Banquet, past President Bob McWhorter presented Richard and Ginny Mohr with the ARS Bronze Medal. As they accepted the award, Richard said, "I thought you were going to get the Bronze Medal." Little did they know that the Chapter Honors Committee was not finished for the day!



Bronze Medal Citation for the Mohrs:

Richard and Ginny Mohr have been outstanding leaders in the Potomac Valley Chapter for many years. Richard served as Vice-President and then President while Ginny was his able assistant. Now she has assumed the role of Vice-President, and he helps with her responsibilities. The Mohrs have been longtime members of our Executive Planning Committee, and were instrumental in seeing that so many activities ran smoothly. They made arrangements for meetings, picnics, and banquets. They have helped coordinate many details including room setup, refreshments, and purchase of picnic supplies. They have assisted with flower shows, plant sales, and field trips. The Mohrs have graciously opened their lovely home and garden for committee meetings, overnight guests, garden tours, and the chapter picnic. On behalf of our appreciative membership, we are pleased to award them the highest honor our chapter can bestow, the ARS Bronze Medal.

Bob and Rosa McWhorter Receive the ARS Bronze Medal

As everyone returned to their seats, Chapter Vice President Ginny Mohr asked Bob and Rosa McWhorter to stand up. They were receiving the Bronze Medal, too. Our chapter has been negligent in thanking those who do so much for us. We really appreciate the hard work of these wonderful people! Congratulations!!



Bronze Medal Citation for the McWhorters:

Bob and Rosa McWhorter have been two of our most active chapter leaders. Bob has served as Chapter Vice President and President multiple times, and they continue to serve on our Executive Planning Committee. They maintain an exquisite garden in Gambrills, Maryland, and open it regularly to our members and to the public. They established our popular chapter photography contest, and have inspired us with images of their flowers and gardens they have visited in presentations. Bob and Rosa have helped coordinate many activities including plant sales, flower shows, field trips, and cutting exchanges. They have raised plants for our chapter and made crosses for the seed exchange. Bob sounded the alarm about a new destructive insect pest in the region, the Asian Ambrosia Beetle. For the continuing leadership and guidance they provide to our organization, the Potomac Valley Chapter presents its highest award, the ARS Bronze Medal.

PVC Suggestion Box – Helpful hints from other chapter members

Nomorobo: Norm Beaudry recommends "Nomorobo" which is a free service that stops annoying robo-telephone calls and telemarketers. Instructions for blocking robocalls are available on their website: www.nomorobo.com/

Zanfel: Jean Beaudry says that a product known as Zanfel used for treating and preventing the rash produced by poison ivy, oak, and sumac really works. Samples were being given away at the Mid Atlantic Nurserymen's Tradeshow (MANTS) in Baltimore but the wash is available in most pharmacies: www.zanfel.com/

If you have something to share, send it to your newsletter editor. We'll try to work it into an upcoming issue.

Can you help in Williamsburg?

We will need many to people to help stage the 2016 Convention in Williamsburg. Here are some of the key activities. If you can assist, please let Don Hyatt know.

Tuesday, April 19

Plant Sale Staging: 8 AM to 6 PM.

Move plants from various places to the hotel.

Wednesday, April 20, 2016

Plant Sale Setup: 8 AM to 5 PM

Put plants on tables and organize the sale.

Flower and Photography Show: 9 AM to 5 PM

Accept entries and organize the display

Registration/Hospitality: 9 AM to 6 PM

Man registration desk and pass out packets

Assist people with Pre-conference tours

Plant Sale Open: 5:00 PM to 11 PM

Cashiers and people to assist with sales

Evening Program: 7 PM to 11 PM

We need 3 Moderators and computer savvy AV people

to run discussion groups: 1) Rhododendron Breeders

Round Table, Native Azaleas, Evergreen Azaleas

Thursday, April 21, 2016

Registration/Hospitality: 7 AM to 9 AM

Man registration desk and pass out packets.

Help people locate bus tours

Richmond Garden Tours: 8 AM to 5 PM

Eight Bus tour captains, assist with lunch and drinks

Plant Sale Open: 4 PM to 7 PM, 10 PM to 11 PM

Cashiers and people to assist with sales

Friday, April 22, 2016

Registration/Hospitality: 8 AM to 9 AM

Man registration desk and pass out packets.

Help people locate bus tours

Norfolk Garden Tours: 8 AM to 5 PM

Eight Bus tour captains, assist with lunch and drinks

Plant Sale Open: 4 PM to 7 PM, 10 PM to 11 PM

Cashiers and people to assist with sales

Saturday, April 23, 2016

Hospitality: 8 AM to 9 AM

Help people locate bus tours

Gloucester Garden Tours: 8 AM to 5 PM

Eight Bus tour captains, assist with lunch and drinks

Plant Sale Open: 4 PM to 7 PM, 10 PM to 11 PM

Assist with sales and customers.

Flower / Photo Show Teardown: 10 PM to 11 PM

Take down exhibits

Sunday, April 24, 2016

Plant Sale Open: 8 AM to 10 AM

Cashiers and people to assist with sales

Plant Sale Teardown: 10 AM to 3 PM

Organize unsold plants and haul away to staging areas.

Clean up room.



Governor's Mansion in Williamsburg



Fort Magruder Inn



Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens



Norfolk Botanical Gardens

North Carolina Nursery Trip:

March 4 – March 6, 2016

Even though we have the convention plant sale this spring, many of us still intend to go on our annual field trip to nurseries in Southern Virginia and North Carolina. Most of the nurseries are mail order and only open to the public a few times a year. I always prefer to see the plants before I purchase rather than having someone select for me. In addition to buying rare plants that we don't often see, most of us enjoy this outing a chance to socialize with good friends.

The trip is very informal. People arrange their own transportation and hotel reservations. We just hang out together since it is more fun to do these activities with others. We bring our own "refreshments" and people share as we talk plants at our private "Happy Hour" in the hotel meeting room. Then we go in small groups to one of the local restaurants for dinner.

We use the Comfort Inn - Garner, NC, as our base of operation, and stay there Friday and Saturday nights. They do give discounts for AARP or AAA. If you stop at the North Carolina Welcome Center, sometimes the hotel is listed in their discount coupon books and you can get an even better price.

Comfort Inn – Garner
126 Cleveland Crossing Drive
Garner, NC 27529 (919) 773-1110

David Parks and his mother often opened Camellia Forest Nursery for our group but his mother passed away recently. Their nursery will be open Friday and Saturday with the others, so we will try for Friday.

George McLellan and some others will be going to a wholesale camellia supplier, Cam Too Nursery in Greensboro, NC, on Friday. The place is huge with 30 acres of hoop houses. It does not sell retail and orders must be placed in advance. It is out of the way for most of us, so that is another reason why we will try to see Camellia Forest that afternoon instead.

Here are the nurseries we hope to visit and some suggested times:

Friday morning: March 4, 2016

Pine Knot Farms (Hours: 10 am – 4 pm)
681 Rockchurch Rd, Clarksville, VA 23927
www.pineknotfarms.com

Target time at Pine Knot: 10:00 am to 12:00 noon
Approximate travel time from DC: 4 hours

On the way to the hotel in Garner, we try to visit Pine Knot Farms for their Hellebore Festival. Note that some GPS systems will take you on a circuitous route west via VA-58 around the Kerr Reservoir, but we have found it just as fast and less subject to getting lost by continuing on I-85 into North Carolina, taking exit 214, and heading

back north on NC-39 to Pine Knot Farms. The nursery offers hellebores we can select in bloom, but also hardy cyclamens and other plants. For those traveling longer distances and run short on time, they may choose to go directly to Camellia Forest. Other nurseries do carry hellebores.



Double Pink Hellebore

Friday afternoon: March 4, 2016

Camellia Forrest Nursery (9 am - 5 pm)
9701 Carrie Road, Chapel Hill, NC 27516
www.camforest.com

Target time at Nursery: 1:30 to 3:30 pm
Travel time from Pine Knot: 1.5 hours

From Pine Knot, we will return to I-85 and head south to via Rt. 25 to Chapel Hill, and then head West on NC-54 to the nursery. Camellia Forest is well known for their extensive camellia collection, but they also have other plants like the flowering tree, *Prunus mume*, rare woodies, and evergreens. After spending an hour or two at the nursery, we will head to the hotel via NC-54 East and I-40 and I-440 around the south side of Raleigh. Note that it will be Friday rush hour, so don't linger too long. Their traffic can be as problematic as that in DC.

Approximate travel time to hotel: 2 hours
Expected arrival time at Garner: 5:30 pm



Camellia 'Pink Icicle'

Saturday morning: March 5, 2016

Big Bloomers Flower Farm (8:30 am – 5 pm)
275 Pressly Foushee Road, Sanford, NC
www.bigbloomersflowerfarm.com

Target time at Big Bloomers: 9:00 – 11:30 am
Travel time from hotel: 1 hour

On Saturday morning, we usually go to Big Bloomers in the morning and Plant Delights Nursery in the afternoon. We usually stop for a fast food lunch in Sanford after Big Bloomers.

Big Bloomers has thousands of varieties of plants at inexpensive prices. They have larger plants in 4-inch to gallon pots such as iris, grasses, hostas, hellebores, daylilies, ferns, wildflowers, plants for sun, plants for shade, house plants, and some woody plants like hydrangeas and quince selections. They sell market packs of perennial starts and bedding plants, as well as garden ornaments. Save room!

Saturday afternoon: March 5, 2016

Plant Delights Nursery (8:00 am – 5:00 pm)
9241 Sauls Road, Raleigh, NC 27603
www.plantdelights.com

Target time at Plant Delights: 1:00 – 4:00 pm
Travel time from Sanford: 1 hour

Tony Avent's Plant Delights is one of the best sources for rare herbaceous perennials. He carries premium plants and some will be at premium prices, but plant aficionados usually don't mind paying for quality. Tony will have plants that you never even knew existed. I have gotten some of my best double hellebores from him. Enjoy several wonderful display gardens and say "Hi" to Tony who is usually in the garden near his house. For shade, try hellebores, cypripedium orchids, arisaemas, epimediums, trilliums, wildflowers, ferns, and hostas. Plants for sun include agaves, baptisias, yuccas, grasses, iris, and more.



Tony Avent greets visitors in front of his home

Whacky Weather!!!

We had an exceptionally mild fall in the Washington DC area this year. In my garden, I had two frosty nights in October, and two nights in the upper 20's in December. There were many days in the 70's and much of the time it was in the 50's and 60's with lots of rain and high humidity. I actually turned on the air conditioner a couple of times just to get rid of the dampness in the house.

Like many in the area, I had azaleas blooming in December. Below is a picture of the Glenn Dale 'Dayspring' blooming in my garden on 12/18/2015.



'Dayspring' Blooming on December 18, 2015

My *Prunus mume* trees (flowering plums) were in full bloom, and I had scattered flowers on forsythia and several other azaleas. Many of my hellebores were opening, far ahead of their typical March debut. Honeybees were rapidly gathering pollen from plants of *Helleboris niger*, the Christmas Rose. It often blooms in the fall and some varieties are finished.



Honeybees Collecting Pollen on the Hellebores

Then in January, winter arrived with a vengeance. So far my thermometer recorded 13 degrees one night and 14 on another, but it was as low as 9 just west of me. Open azaleas and those showing color are gone for the season. I did dissect some buds of early bloomers and did see some damage but not total loss. Plants that were still dormant should be fine. Of course, the winter is not over and we will surely have more cold and snow before true spring arrives.

Raising Rhododendrons from Seed *by Don Hyatt*

Since we are planning a hands-on seed planting activity at our next meeting, I wanted to share how I raise rhododendrons and azaleas from seed. It is very easy, and a great way to raise many plants at very little cost. Rhododendrons can bloom in 3 to 4 years from seed, azaleas even sooner. Seed is cheap!



Pot of Native Azalea Seedlings

Container – Any clean pot will do, but I must find a clear plastic bag that will cover that pot and leave a bit of headroom for the seedlings to grow inside.

Plastic Bags - I enclose my pots in clear plastic bags to create mini-greenhouses. It will keep the humidity high inside while the seedlings grow during the winter months. I will not have to do anything all winter long except watch them grow. Should small seedlings dry out just once, they often die so this method means they will succeed on their own in spite of my negligence.

Medium – I use my standard rhododendron medium: equal parts peat moss and perlite. I do add some coarse sand since I like the weight and texture sand provides. Avoid sand that has any lime or salt content since it is toxic. Recently I have been adding some Pro-Mix since it has nutrients and beneficial fungi which aid growth. The medium should be moist but not wet since too much moisture encourages disease.

Planting - Sprinkle the seeds over the top of the medium. Do not cover them with soil, but place the entire pot inside the clear plastic bag to create that mini-greenhouse. You may mist the seed lightly with water, but the 100% humidity inside is usually enough moisture to initiate germination.

Light – Rhododendrons and azaleas do require adequate light to grow well. I use inexpensive “Shop Lights”, fixtures with two fluorescent tubes that I suspend about 12 inches above the containers. The lights can be plugged into a timer that keeps them on for at least 16 to 24 hours a day. Another option is to set the containers on a bright north or east windowsill that doesn't get too much direct sun since heat can build up inside the bag and kill the seedlings.

Care - Seeds should germinate in 2 to 4 weeks. In most cases they will require no additional care until spring. The condensation on the bag usually falls back into the pot so there is no need to water. After seedlings have germinated, I have made one very weak application of fertilizer (1/8 strength). Be careful, though, since fertilizer can kill. Low light and high fertilizer makes plants prone to disease. Warren Grooms of the ASA recently shared a George Harding quote, “If you feel the need to fertilize, take a cold shower instead.”

Transplanting – If seedlings are too close, I will transplant crowded pots to space plants an inch or so apart in new containers. I then put them back in bags under the lights. After the weather is warm, the plants can go outside. I often transplant at that time into larger flats or community pots, spacing seedlings about 1½ to 2 inches apart. The flats can be set outside in some bright area that has open shade, such as the north side of the house or beside some larger plant. They can grow on their own all summer but I do cover flats with netting or screening to keep the critters out.



Flat of Rhododendron Seedlings Ready for Transplanting

Problems – Potting soil that is too wet is a major cause of problems with seedlings. A gray mold can develop on seedlings inside the plastic bags, especially if they are planted too close together. Opening the bags, picking out the mold by hand, and letting things dry out will often help. I prefer to transplant any seedlings with mold into pots with fresh medium. Another problem some have had is with tiny fungus gnats. The larva will eat roots of seedlings, but I have never had an outbreak using my mini-greenhouses. Not enough room to party!

Extended Care – Natural selection will eliminate the weaker plants, but cold frame protection helps seedlings survive that first winter. I sometimes mulch flats well after cold arrives, but many will perish by spring anyway. I transplant whatever is left into larger pots to grow on, and give away the excess. Seedlings make great gifts for horticulturally inclined friends. We also need stewards who will give homes to our native azaleas and rhododendrons. Plant the neighborhood!

